

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4474

INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL

S E C R E T TOKYO 11738

EXDIS

FOR ASST. SECY. HABIB FROM AMBASSADOR HODGSON

E.O. 11652: XGDS

TAGS: PFOR, JA, KS, KN

SUBJECT: CURRENT JAPAN-ROK DISPUTE

1. WITH THIS SUBJECT RAPIDLY COMING TO DEFINITIVE STAGE, I THOUGHT I SHOULD GIVE YOU A PURELY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT.

2. AT AN EARLIER STAGE, I FELT THE JAPANESE LACKED APPRECIATION OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE DISPUTE. THE QUALITY OF OFFICIAL STATEMENTS AND PENETRATION OF ELEMENTS OF THE ISSUE WERE LESS THAN SATISFACTORY. NOW I BELIEVE JAPANESE HAVE COME TO A PROPER APPRECIATION AND ARE BEHAVING ACCORDINGLY. THE REMARKABLY LOW-KEY, ALMOST UNDERSTANDING, REACTION TO THE ATTACK ON EMBASSY IN SEOUL BY BOTH GOVERNMENT AND MEDIA HERE SEEMED TO ME TO CONSTITUTE THE WATERSHED IN CHANGED ATTITUDE. TODAY'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF WILLINGNESS TO SEND SPECIAL ENVOY TO SEOUL CONFIRMS MY CONVICTION THAT A CHANGE HAS INDEED OCCURRED.

3. MEANWHILE FROM THIS PERSPECTIVE IT APPEARS THAT ROK HAS CONTINUED TO MAINTAIN A HIGH-DECIBEL POSTURE, PARTICULARLY AT THE PARK LEVEL. BASED ON VARIOUS

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INFO SOURCES IT WOULD SEEM THAT PARK MAY WELL BE "USING" THIS SITUATION FOR DIVERSIONARY PURPOSES.

CONSIDERING THE EARLIER PRESSURES, INCLUDING EXTERNAL PRESSURES, ON PARK FOR HIS SO-CALLED REPRESSIVE MEASURES, IT IS NOT DIFFICULT TO DIVINE A MOTIVATING TEMPTATION FOR SUCH DIVERSIONARY ACTIVITY.

4. CONTINUATION OF CURRENT ATTITUDES MAY WELL COST PARK SUPPORT IN MANY QUARTERS ON MANY ISSUES OF CONCERN TO ROK, AND AN ALREADY ECONOMICALLY UNSTEADY ROK WILL AT MINIMUM FACE MAGNIFIED CREDIT STRINGENCIES AND LOSS OF ITS VERY SUBSTANTIAL JAPANESE AID. FROM THIS VANTAGE, THE NEED WOULD SEEM TO BE TO FIND SOME WAY IN WHICH PARK, NOT LOWER LEVELS IN ROK BUT PARK HIMSELF, COULD BE BROUGHT TO UNDERSTAND THAT HIS CURRENT APPROACH IS UNHELPFUL, THAT IN ANYTHING BUT THE SHORTEST OF SHORT RUNS A CONTINUED PURSUIT OF HIS CURRENT POSTURE WILL PROVE TO BE NEGATIVE FOR HIM AND EVEN RUINOUS FOR ROK.

5. IN OTHER WORDS, IF ROK IS AT ALL INTERESTED IN PREVENTING A RUPTURE, IT MUST FIND A WAY TO RELAX ITS STANCE. IN MY VIEW THE JAPANESE GOVT IS PRECIPITOUSLY CLOSE TO THE END OF MOVES IT CAN MAKE.
HODGSON

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